

population-based rates using the middle-year census counts as applicable to each of the three years. The volume will resume 5-year rates whenever corrected pre-1980 population bases are available or will build up to 5-year rates in data year 1983, whichever comes first.

- The 1981 Volume 2 will resume standard format with 3-year rates (1979-81) replacing 5-year rates. If corrected 1979 population bases are unavailable, the volume will use middle-year 1980 census counts as above.
- The 1982 and 1983-and-forward Volume 2's will show 4-year and 5-year rates respectively.

Final Comments

For the social scientist, population-based rates are a cornerstone to trend analysis. As one examines trends in health, education, corrections, etc., it is natural to question the completeness and validity of these data. It is also natural to direct these questions at the social event being measured, i.e., the numerator of the rate. Consideration is seldom given to the quality of the measurement of the population at risk—the denominator. Denominators based on accurate census data are crucial, especially if one is examining small area statistics, category-specific rates or adjusted rates. It is not sufficient to judge the quality of social statistics by the quality of the data system that generates the numerator. It is not sufficient for agencies generating social statistics to report on the quality of their data only. It is necessary for both researchers and statistics agencies to examine the effects of errors in census counts and projections of those counts on any trend analysis being undertaken. During the next year, SCHS will endeavor to make the reader aware of real changes vs. artificial changes in the health status of North Carolinians.

ERRATUM

Statistical Primer Vol. 1 No. 1 p. 7.
Comparison 2 under Indirect. Change
standard to study.